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Education

## Drive aims to keep adult education

**Students and teachers canvass Costa Mesa gathering signatures to save Westside program.**

By Tom Ragan

A movement to save Newport-Mesa Unified's adult education program is gaining momentum, as hundreds of English as second language students and teachers who expect to be laid off have been gathering signatures for a petition drive.

A letter-writing campaign to elected officials in Sacramento is also underway.

Last week, on short notice, at least 100 students and residents of Costa Mesa's Westside showed up at the office of the Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers to express fears about the program's imminent closure.

"It's heartbreaking to see what's happening," said Kimberly Claytor, president of the federation, the teachers union, which lent its office space to the group for the meeting.

"I've talked to the superintendent [Jeffrey Hubbard], and I've let him know about our concerns and about cutting adult ed," Claytor said. "I've lived on Costa Mesa's Westside since 1990. I've watched it closely. The community has been uplifted by having the adult ed program. It's helped them out. Now it looks like it's going to be gone."

The Board of Education approved a resolution that called for eliminating the program, with its multitude of ESL classes.

The nearby High School Diploma Lab, which is also on Meyer Place in Costa Mesa, is to be whittled down to two full-time employees working there next year.

In all, the cost-saving measure would save the district \$848,000 — part of the \$12 million in cuts that the district said it's been forced to make.

As many as 45 part-time and full-time teachers at the adult education program are scheduled to be laid off or reassigned to the district in another capacity, while the Westside, which is heavily Latino, will have to find another site to learn English, Claytor said.

Jennifer Miller, a coordinator at the High School Diploma Lab, has already been notified that she will lose her full-time position, said Gary Miller, her husband, who now fears their next loss will be their condominium in Aliso Viejo.

"We're on the bubble," said Gary Miller, who's running for the Orange County Board of Education in November in Area 5, whose district includes part of the Newport-Mesa school district and Costa Mesa. "We talked to who we needed to talk to, and they said it was going to be very difficult to give us a loan modification. So we may have to go to a short sale."

His wife has worked at the district for 15 years.

Gary Miller, a retired teacher in his 60s, has already retired from teaching.

"Things aren't looking good," he said, "either for us or the poor folks who won't be able to learn English anymore."

Laura Boss, the district spokeswoman, said the school board is expected to make a final decision May 11. So far, nearly 120 teachers at the district have received preliminary layoff notices, but the final version of the layoffs won't be known until early May, when senior teachers and administrators decide whether to retire, Boss said.

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